

# Committee on Resources

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## **Statement of Josie Gonzales**

### **Council Member**

### **City of Fontana**

#### Testimony

Before Subcommittee on Water and Power

Committee on Resources

United States House of Representatives

Hearing on the Southern California Groundwater Remediation Bill

June 23, 2004

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member Napolitano, and distinguished members of the Water & Power Subcommittee. I am Josie Gonzales, a City Council Member for the City of Fontana, California. I thank you and Congressman Baca for allowing me the opportunity to testify here today.

A clean and reliable source of water is critical to the ongoing development of the Inland Empire. As a City Council member of the City of Fontana, one of the fastest growing cities in the entire county, I feel obliged to testify to the need of identifying a funding source to provide for the clean-up of the existing perchlorate contamination that affects my community and threatens the economic expansion of the Southern California market.

I testify on behalf of local businesses and residents whose voice needs to be heard in the capital. As a business owner myself I speak on behalf of businesses who have invested their livelihood in an area they have seen growing and expanding. As a Council Member and community leader, I speak on behalf of residents who wish to protect their children's health and share in the promise of a better life. I stand in their stead before the Committee.

Perchlorate clean-up is very expensive. The contamination of the ground water, largely unidentified for many years, was created by private, industrial and federal interests that no longer exist within our community. Though they have moved on, they leave a legacy of pollution to those who follow. It is neither right nor equitable to balance the costs of such clean-up solely on the backs of the residents who now choose to call communities like Fontana their home. Perchlorate clean-up is expensive and the problem is bigger than the consumer's ability to pay. It is in times such as these that it is both expected and incumbent on the government to step in and find solutions that are in the interests of the many.

I am in support of Congressman Joe Baca's and Congresswoman Grace Napolitano's efforts to assist in cleanup of perchlorate contamination. As proposed, the Southern California Groundwater Remediation Bill will support areas covered by the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) and the San Gabriel River watershed. The legislation will create a remediation fund to assist in groundwater remediation. The fund will be administered by the Secretary of Interior through the Bureau of Reclamation. As proposed, it will authorize such sums as necessary for the cleanup and includes a provision that clean-up costs of contaminated groundwater will be eligible for reimbursement as well.

The Inland Empire was recently named by Inc. Magazine as the second best place in the county for business. The Inland Empire finished only second to Atlanta, Georgia, in this rating. The Inland Empire's ability to continue to fuel this economic engine for the entire county is significantly impacted by its ability to provide a safe and reliable source of water.

Much of the Inland Empire is served from water basins. In recent times, the wells that serve this region have been identified with unacceptable levels of perchlorate contamination. It is imperative that these well systems be treated for the removal of the perchlorate contamination. Perchlorate contamination, untreated, may expand to other areas of the basin. If so, this could vastly affect the reliability of water sources

throughout Southern California.

The issue of perchlorate has nearly become a daily news story in the Southern California press. Residents in the Inland Empire are looking for solutions and are waiting to see leadership evolve to lay out a course of action. I wish to commend Congressman Baca and Congresswoman Grace Napolitano for having the foresight and courage to step forward to demonstrate this leadership.

For the past several months many agencies have informally been meeting together in an attempt to find local solutions for the existing contamination. These agencies include the City of Fontana, City of Rialto, City of Colton, City of Ontario, City of San Bernardino, Cucamonga Valley Water District, West San Bernardino Valley Water District, Fontana Water and others. As local leaders we remain committed to finding a solution. We now would welcome the federal government to join with us as a partner working towards a solution.

Thank-you in advance for your support and commitment.